

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Restoration Coordination Team
Conference call 10-18-06, 3:00pm CDT**

Participants:

Lynn Martin (USACE)
Drew Puffer (EPA)
Bobbi Reed (GoMF)
Len Bahr (LA Gov Office)
Greg DuCote (LDWF)
Dugan Sabins (LDEQ)
Kristopher Benson (NOAA)
Columbus Brown (USFWS)

Dawn Lavoie (USGS)
Herb Leady (MMS)
Larry Parson (USACE)
Carl Ferraro (ADCNR)
Randy Runnels (FDEP)
Quenton Dokken (GMF)
Chris David (NOAA)

1.) Discussion of the upcoming November meeting. What work needs to be done (information and data gathered, technical experts invited, etc.) in preparation for that meeting?

LB: Will send an updated copy of the agenda out. 1st portion of meeting agenda, providing the background for restoration work in LA, is fairly well fleshed out with commitments from a number of distinguished speakers (specifics follow; see attached draft agenda). Leaves afternoon and following day for development of state recommendations and discussion of IAM. The plan is to have 4 presentations, have a break, then have 2 more. In the afternoon, focus on big picture issues, like sea level rise, climate change, and hurricane risk. Blocked off about 20 minutes for each speaker.

CF: Sounds like a lot. We need to make sure we have time to discuss the presentations and how they relate to our work and the GAP.

LB: A working lunch would be a discussion of the presentations.

BR: Waiting to confirm dates during this call. After the call, will reserve a hotel and meeting space.

KB: Along with some other feds, we developed a draft template that could be used for each of the state led workshops in order to help focus the meetings and address specific actions in the Governors' Action Plan. [Emailed the plan to everyone for review while on the call]

KG: Can you go through the agenda now, for those who don't have access at the moment?

KB: [Describes the "goals section in the front]

KB: Will presentations be in powerpoint?

LB: Likely, but I will check.

GD: At least ask them to arrive 15-20 minutes early with their flash drives, so we can put them on.

KB: Will bring a laptop and projector

CF: If there is a problem, I can bring laptop and projector as well.

CD: Volunteer to deal/coordinate the technical issues.

QD: Presenters should be aware of the GAP and tailor their presentations to the issues addressed in the GAP

LB: They are aware of the GAP and the purpose for the workshop.

2.) Travel arrangements

BR: Invitations have gone out, arrangements have been made with hotel, travel arrangements for TC, JW, CF are made; will coordinate with RR and others outstanding. Will need credit cards from federal attendees.

3.) Development of Environmental Compliance Issues Matrix:

KB: Want to get a list on paper so that team can make progress developing recommendations for solutions during workshop.

GD: 1. Federal consistency in LA related to the “base plan” or Federal Standard in dealing with dredge material from channels. Ostensibly, a sponsor will pay 25% over cost share, but congress hasn’t recently funded the 204 CAP. USACE also has to “want” to do a project. Considers it criminal (hyperbole) that we dredge as much as we can and dump it into ODMDS sites or other non-beneficial use sites. 2.

Designation process for ODMDS sites needs review. 3. Conflicting federal missions (i.e., between NMFS & USFWS) are problematic in implementing restoration. For instance, cheniere ridges are significant coastal habitat, but building them impacts fisheries habitat. 4. The RSM process isn’t any use in LA because local USACE O&M managers aren’t interested or don’t want to do the work to justify it. Cost of environmental compliance also is part of the costs for the beneficial use increment of using the material (e.g. cultural resource surveys, etc.); ports do not want to pay for this too. LA-approved Conservation Plan pursuant to CWPPRA dedicates ~1M annually from state trust fund for restoration implementation (as match for CAP), but it hasn’t been used.

RR: While perhaps administrative hurdles could be addressed, technical standards should not be relaxed, and cautionary language should be included in any recommendations the RRCT forwards to maintain these standards. Hurdles keep us from doing harm.

CF: Cost share is also problematic for AL, but recognize need for specific grant process/admin workshop to address this issue and others arising from funding mechanisms. Contrary to experience of LA, the RSM process works well in AL. Conflicting agency missions (even intra-agency) are a big concern in AL as well; marsh or reef construction in less productive open-water areas considered critical habitat for Gulf Sturgeon are a perfect example (hasn’t yet proven problematic in AL but has in FL and likely will in AL).

Feds: Intend to engage regulatory personnel who can address these issues.

Call ended at 4:00 PM CDT.

Discussion with TC & JW following call resulted in additional items for inclusion in issues matrix:

Distinction should be made between environmental compliance administrative processes and technical processes. Administrative processes could be eliminated or significantly altered in order to work around; examples are USACE indemnification requirements that are variously interpreted and often refused by TX state agencies, and EPA QAPP requirements. Technical process cannot be eliminated and should not be worked around, but can be improved. Examples include potential 15-day interagency review for NWPs, application of the ICT process to other large projects (not just fed), standardized requirements for determining success of restoration in monitoring based on project type or ecosystem requirements rather than species. Discussion of relative productivity or value of habitats, prioritization of habitat types would ease inter- or intra-agency conflicts. Discussion of restoration goals in historical perspective should be engaged in

order to aid in prioritization exercise (is project intended to maintain ecosystem services of today or of some point in the past?).